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REMARKS BY USAID/CAMBODIA MISSION DIRECTOR

JONATHAN ADDLETON AT.

AED AVIAN INFLUENZA WORKSHOP

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Friday, December 16, 2005

Your Excellency, Dr. Yim, other distinguished visitors and guests: On behalf of the U.S. Government and the US Agency for International Development we are pleased to join with Cambodian colleagues and counterparts in addressing the serious health, social and economic issue of Avian Influenza.

On his recent visit to Cambodia and other countries in the region, the US Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Levitt reiterated several times that Avian Influenza is still an animal disease.

However, he also stated that it is very important that we work together to plan for and be prepared if – and it is a big IF – Avian Influenza becomes a human to human disease.

As part of that preparation, the US Government made a commitment to the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia to provide both technical assistance and materials and supplies to reduce the risk of Avian Influenza.

In addition to surveillance equipment, laboratories and testing, and mapping we are also providing technical assistance on communication and behavior change.

Within Cambodia, it is the rural and small backyard poultry farmers that have the highest risk and the most to lose from Avian Influenza. Poultry is their food and an important source of nutrition; it also is their livelihood.

That is why we are focusing our assistance and resources in communicating appropriate behaviors that can reduce risks for backyard poultry farmers.

USAID has long experience and positive results in effecting change in behavior among at-risk communities. In this instance, it has selected the Academy for Educational Development to work with FAO, WHO, UNICEF, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, and Fisheries and the Department of Animal Health and Production to communicate appropriate behaviors aimed at reducing risk.

This workshop is both important and timely. We are pleased to join with Cambodian colleagues and counterparts in expressing appreciation as well as pride in the fact that this pioneering research – the first among backyard poultry farmers within the region – is now completed. Analysis of the results should provide new insights into farmer behaviors. It will also provide important information on what needs to be done to help reduce risk. This in turn will contribute to the goal that we all share – to assure health and safety within this important segment of rural Cambodia.

Your participation in this workshop underscores your interest and commitment in identifying and communicating the important behaviors needed to confront the threat of Avian Influenza. Once again, I thank you for your participation and look forward to hearing more about the results and outcomes of this important event.

Thank You !